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## Laura Vermeer Letter

Laura Vermeer

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Sunday, April 28

Dear Mrs. England,

I'm so pleased to have this opportunity to tell you how much pleasure and instruction I have received from you personally, and from your theater productions over the years. The memories are still vivid and I feel I can thank you with even more real appreciation now.

I first saw your production of Magnificent Obsessions at age eight or nine and have been fascinated with the theater ever since. After that it was I Remember Mama, Elizabeth the Queen and The Admirable Crichton. At last, I came to the Academy and it was my turn.

I remember how patient and encouraging you were. You always allowed us to develop our characters in our own way and never told us we were awful. I have, since, experienced other directors without such effective psychology.

How much personal attention you gave us as we prepared our pieces for speech contests, and how faithfully you made the arrangements and saw to it that we got to them. Now I realize how much planning and supervision this required in addition to your other duties and, in spite of the fact that at one time you were quite ill. I'm amazed at and grateful for your dedication. But, it was so good for some of us provincial little ones who, like myself, had never

eaten in a restaurant or stayed overnight in a motel until that time.

It delights me to remember your personal interest; the advice, encouragement, and constructive criticism that, at the time, I would not have tolerated from my own dear mother. And there were the gatherings at your home after plays where we could see ourselves on slides or film and relive the fun. You always treated us like real guests, with a pretty buffet table and a crackling fire, and gave us an example of graciousness.

There are so many "Mrs E." stories to tell but, the one that best illustrates to me the indomitable person that you are happened during the production of Anne Frank. Peter's father was supposed to throw me over his shoulder and carry me to a chair. The young man flatly stated that he could not, I was too heavy. Mrs England marched up on stage and said, "What do you mean you can't? A big, strapping fellow like you! This is how it's done." And using the proper leverage you lifted your own weight plus about thirty pounds. Do you remember?

Because of you, even a bare stage with its heavy curtains and flats in storage, is a magic place to me. I hope to pass this interest on to my children and if all your students and enthusiastic audiences can do this, your great gift to us will be enjoyed for many years to come. You're a very special person, Mrs. E.

Sincerely,

Laura Vermeer